

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Australia

## Submission to the Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business-Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012

I am a permanent employee, working as a Registered Nurse, currently earning around \$38 per hour.

I am a 51 yr old married woman with 2 boys, 1 just about to start year 12 at the local government high school (can't afford private) and 1 in his 1st year as an apprentice hairdresser. Yes I do have a mortgage and get very little in the way of government "handouts" because of my wage. I work permanent part time, 20hrs a week and my husband works full time in IT. We pay our taxes, have private health insurance, a mortgage and pay into Super Fund (I also Salary Sacrifice what I can).

If penalty rates were abolished my life style would decrease, we don't go out often but when we do, it's usually quite inexpensive eg/ \$10.90 pp buffett dinner.

Both my sons are working, the one in Y12 has 2 part time jobs as he wants to go on an excursion to Europe with the school next year. I told him "the money tree died of root rot and if he wanted to go he'd have to pay". That's why he has 2 jobs. I work mainly night duty (have done for 15yrs) as this attracts the highest penalties on a M-F shift. When was the last time any member of the senate did this and keep in mind the latest medical information and studies on night duty workers ie/ shorter life expectancy and higher illness rates! If parlimetnary workers were faced with those studies, they'd be moving heaven and earth to address them, but hey we're mear night workers, the "dog watch" and are often treated as such. Which is what abolishing penatlies will do. On my base of \$760 per week, I attract M-F \$114 penalties (before tax). This is the difference between private health care and medicare only. It's also the difference between public School and Private schools. It's the difference with putting a little extra into Super or hoping there is an Aged Care pension when I'm older. it's the difference of my sons playiong weekend sport or sitting at home doing nothing. That's what my penatly rates do and what the loss will mean to me and many others, particularly sinle parents, and I work with a few.

My weekends are important to me because I don't always get a "full" weekend. Regularly working Fri nights and sleeping Saturdays or starting Sunday night and having to sleep before the shift I regularly miss out on at lot of social events. Alternatively, I go to events without sleeping and have been known to fall asleep in church, at the dinner table, even in a pool (not safe!).

I have been working rotating shifts throughout my entire nursing career which commenced Feb 1979 (now in my 34th yr). In that time I have missed out on weddings, christenings, birthday parties, school functions for the kids, kids sports grand finals, kids school sports representation, multiple "girls" nights out, mothers group functions, untold family social functions and work "do's". The penalty rates go a little way in compensating for this.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. As a registered nurse working in an Emergency Department, I am regularly harassed both verbally and physically (punched and spat at) by patients and their "relatives", but I keep going back for more due to that 15% (M-F)night duty penalty.

In recent medical studies, those that work night duty have a lower life expectancy and higher cancer rates and yet I get 15% for M-F nights and 50 and 75% for Sat and Sun respectively. These penalties assist covering things such as my medical fund, which I'll probably need in a few years to assist me should I get any of the illnesses sited in the studies.

I am an aging nurse which is more the "norm" than the exception if we look at trends over the 30+ years I have been nursing and one of the few things that does make nursing palatable is the penalties.

I am sure that if the members of the senate were told they couldn't access their Super (just an example) when they leave the Parliament (like real people) there would be an outcry like never before. This is my outcry, I can't touch my Super till I'm 58, so please don't touch my penalties.

Walk in my shoes for a few shifts in an Emergency Department (particularly Triage) with backgrounds of various socio economic, varying cultural and age demographics, with diagnoses ranging from acute psychosis through to dementia and sore throats! You will see even more nuses looking at M-F daylight hours and staffing shortages will become much worse and then where will your National Emergency Access Targets be?!

Submitted by

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Wednesday 26th of September 2012